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## SITE CONTEXT AND HISTORY

### Introduction

The Carvers Creek State Park study area is located in the Sandhills region of the state. The Sandhills region is known for its rich cultural history as well as an biologically diverse ecosystem. The North Carolina State Parks system has identified three specific properties within the study area for Carvers Creek State Park, and more land is under negotiation or investigation for purchase.

### Systemwide Plan for State Parks and New Parks for the New Century

The Systemwide Plan for North Carolina State Parks, which established a framework and plan for improvement of the system, was updated in 2009. Based on the 1987 State Parks Act, the Systemwide Plan evaluated the current resources of the system, identified duplications and deficiencies, provided recommendations, and explained the trends in visitor use and impacts. The State Parks Act mandates that the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation conserve representative examples of the diversity of North Carolina's natural resources and make those natural areas available to the public for recreation and environmental education. See Appendix A for the 1987 State Parks Act. As North Carolina's population continues to grow, the demand for outdoor recreation continues to increase as well. See Figure 1.1 for the park's location in the state.

Some areas of the state, such as the Sandhills, are under-served with recreational and environmental educational opportunities. In addition, pressures of development continue to threaten sites that should be protected, such as land that contains wetlands, habitats of rare species, and other special features. It is increasingly important to identify such sites to ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy and learn from North Carolina's natural heritage.

The N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation has identified some of the most threatened natural resources in the state through the New Parks for the New Century initiative. Sites are chosen because of high conservation values, diversity, and suitability for recreation. Of the 47 sites under consideration for protection in the initiative, three were identified as potential state parks, including Carvers Creek State Park.



*Longleaf pine forest*

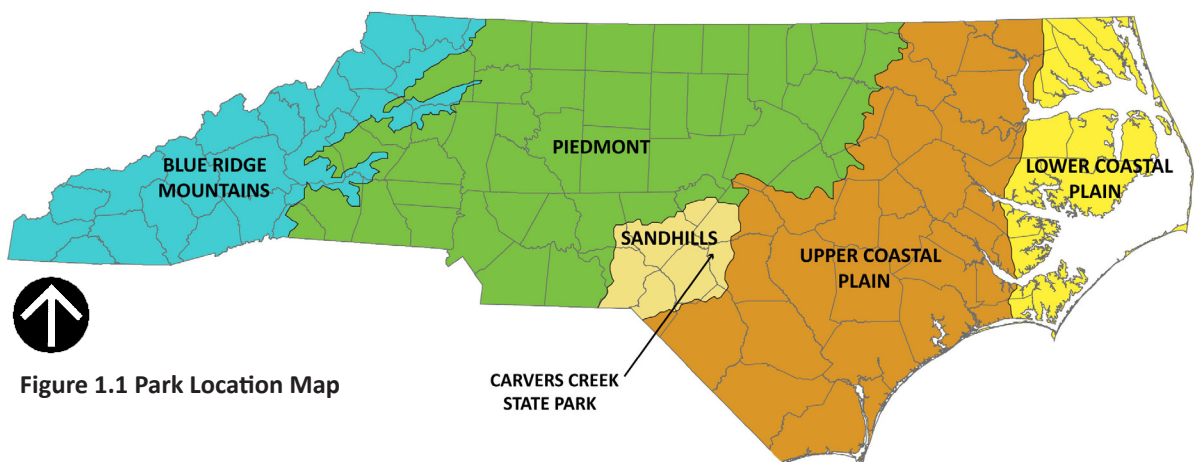
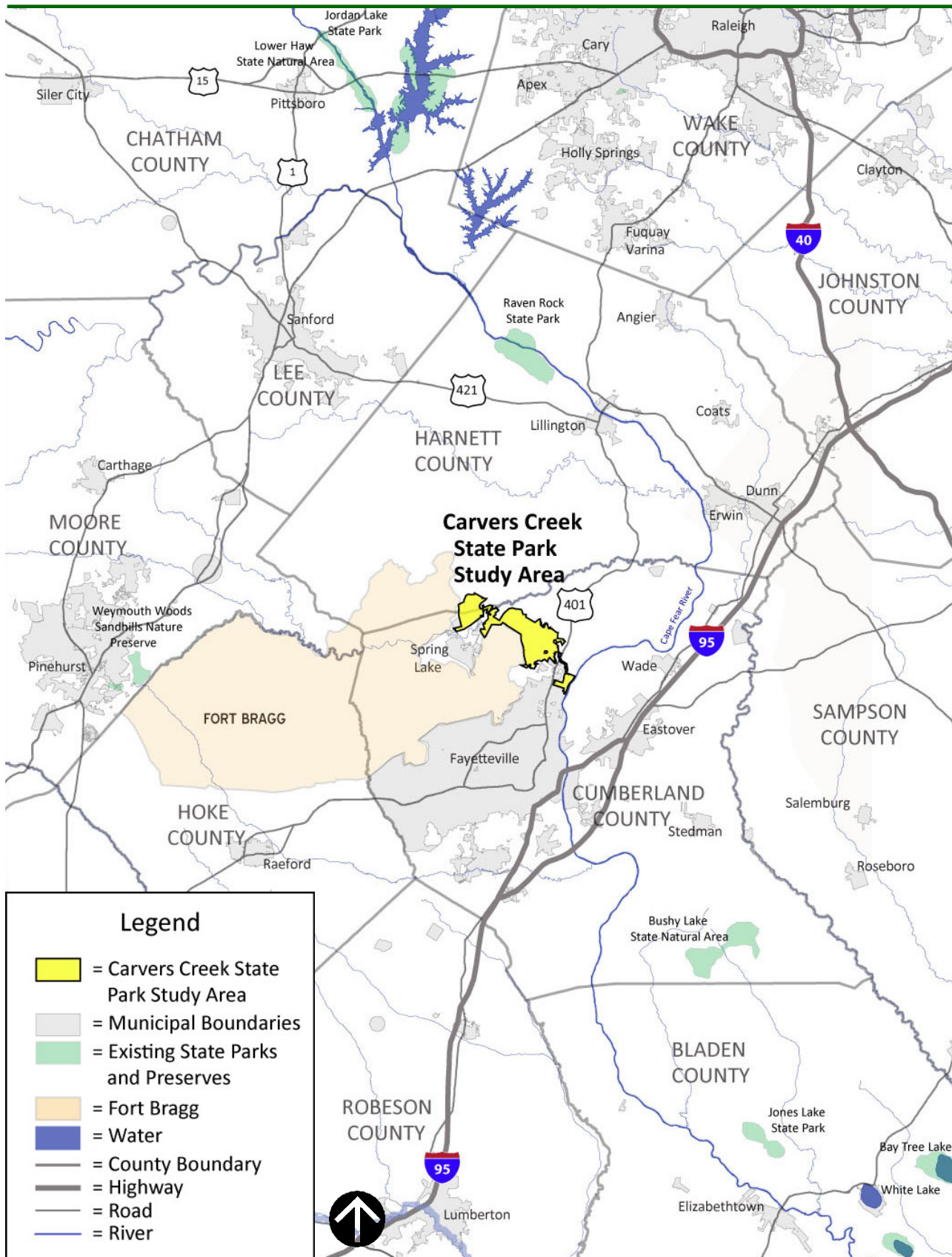


Figure 1.1 Park Location Map



**Figure 1.2 Regional Context**





The study area for Carvers Creek State Park was selected as a potential state park for several reasons. The recreational need in this part of the state suggests that a state park here would be well-used. Cumberland and Harnett counties are home to some of the most biologically diverse ecosystems in the state with a very high conservation value. Several large parcels of land are still available for protection and inclusion in the state park. Many conservation partners including Sandhills Area Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy and others also maintain property in the area for protection.

### Study Area Description

The study area for Carvers Creek State Park, shown in Figure 1.2, is located north of Fayetteville in the Sandhills region of North Carolina. It covers approximately 8,500 acres and is comprised of primarily agricultural and rural land. The study area is bordered to the west by Fort Bragg and to the east by the Cape Fear River. Approximately 70 miles south of Raleigh, 150 miles east of Charlotte, and 130 miles west of Wilmington; the park study area is centrally located in relation to several large North Carolina cities.

The Sandhills region is characterized by longleaf pine forests, rolling topography and sandy soil. The longleaf pine ecosystem is an important habitat for

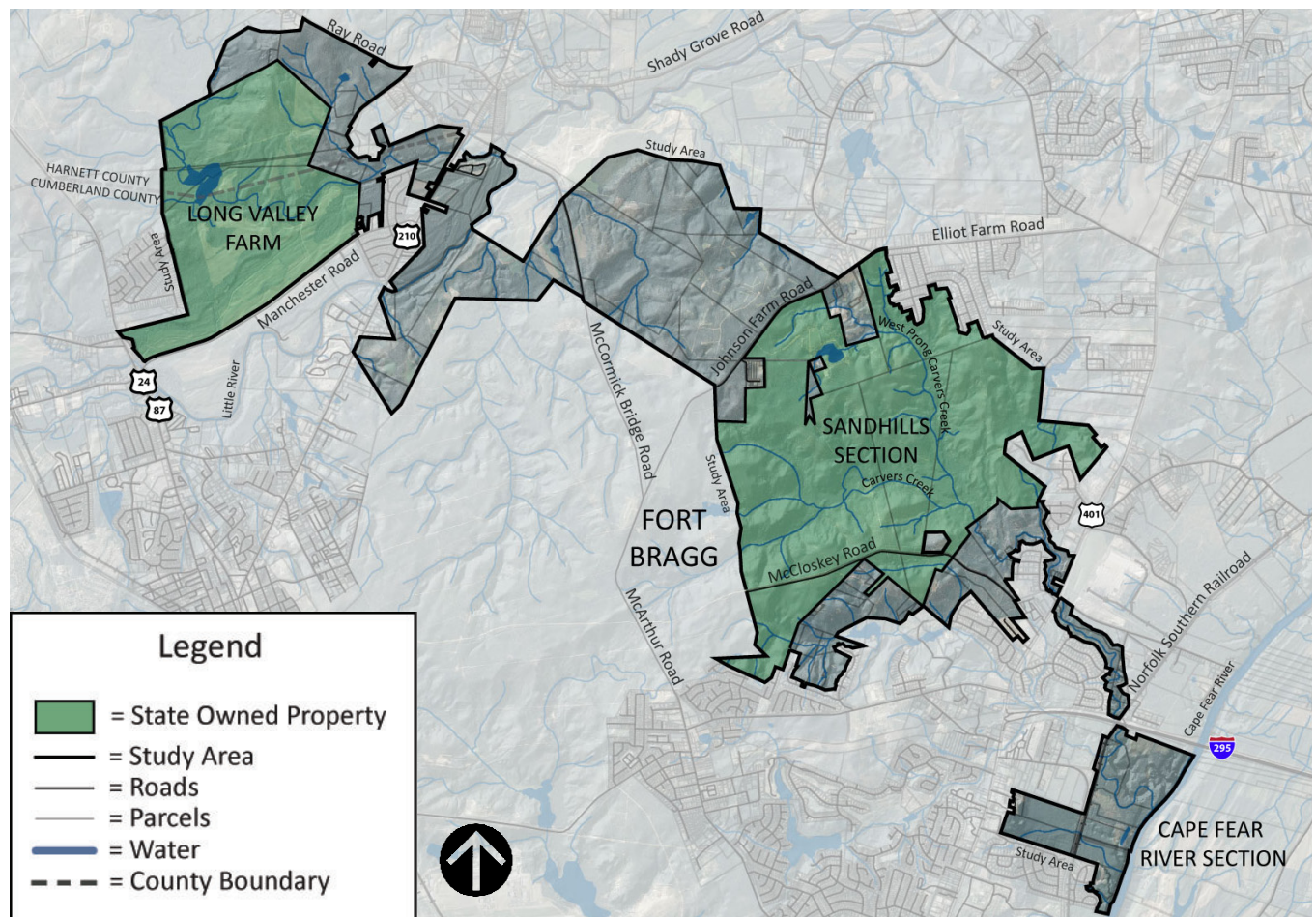


Figure 1.3 Study Area Parcels - Not to Scale

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several endangered and protected plant and animal species, most notably the Red-cockaded Woodpecker. Two properties are being studied in depth in this master plan process, including Long Valley Farm in the northwest region of the study area, and the Sandhills Section, located in the central region of the study area. Each property has distinct qualities and has been identified as appropriate for conservation and/or restoration. See Figure 1.3 for Study Area Parcels.

The Long Valley Farm property is approximately 1,400 acres and straddles Cumberland and Harnett counties. Bordered to the west and the south by Fort Bragg, the site includes a combination of farmland, pasture, and woodland.

The 2,900-acre Sandhills Section is located just north of the city of Fayetteville. The site includes several mature longleaf pine stands and numerous wetlands and creeks, including the headwaters of Carvers Creek.

## Cultural Resources/History of the Region

The Paleo-Indian Period dated from circa 10000 and 8000 B.C. The earliest inhabitants of the southeastern United States were highly mobile and relied on plants and small game for sustenance. There are very few archaeological sites found today with Paleo-Indian artifacts. Population densities may have been higher in the Piedmont areas of North Carolina, rather than the Coastal Plain. However, a few artifacts from this time period have been found on Fort Bragg property.

The Archaic Period, between 8000 and 1000 B.C., brought a new reliance on a variety of food sources, such as fish, birds, wild plant resources and game animals. Settlements were still very mobile, with groups relocating to take advantages of seasonally available resources. This period is also seen as a period of adjustment to changing warmer climates.

The Woodland Period, between ca. 1000 B.C. and A.D. 1650, is characterized by pottery making, horticulture and reliance on seed crops. Settlements became more permanent due to the domestication of various seed-producing indigenous weeds. Because many more artifacts of this period are found in the Piedmont or Coastal Plain, archaeologists have had to reconstruct the American Indian pattern of settlement in the Sandhills. It is assumed that this area would have been influenced by the Siouan-speaking inhabitants of the Coastal Plain and groups who settled in the eastern Piedmont.

European settlement in the interior of North Carolina generally did not occur until the early 1700s. The area was originally settled by an influx of Scottish Highlander settlers that migrated to the Upper Cape Fear region. At that time, the Cape Fear River was the only direct water route into North Carolina from the coast, and it was a major transportation corridor for trade and commerce.

Around 1720, the land grant office for the Cape Fear opened, and settlement began along the river. The first settlements were about 100 miles north of Wilmington in the Rockfish and Cross Creek areas. This area became the cen-



*Overhills logo, courtesy of "An Oral History of Overhills," Fort Bragg Cultural Resources Management Program*



*Percy Rockefeller, courtesy of "An Oral History of Overhills," Fort Bragg Cultural Resources Management Program*

ter of Scottish Highlander settlement in North Carolina. By the mid-1750s, highlanders were settling along the upper and lower Little River, and most were farmers.

The longleaf pine forests of the Sandhills proved to be the most essential economic generator of the region. The longleaf pine produces the highest quality pine rosin/crude gum of any species of pine in eastern North America. Pine tar, pitch, resin, and turpentine were made from the gum, and the trees themselves provided excellent masts and timber for ship building. In addition to the naval uses for the lumber, the longleaf pine was also timbered for home building, shingles, and barrels. The majority of the tar, turpentine, and pitch was shipped to England and the rest of the colonies. Water-powered grist and saw mills, tanneries, small iron forges and tar kilns were prominent in the region during the colonial period. The native longleaf pine forests were severely degraded by these industries and have never fully recovered.

Agricultural production generally focused on the harvest of corn, peas, beans, sweet potatoes, white potatoes, peaches, and grapes for local subsistence needs as well as local trade. Crops of rye, wheat, oats, cotton, flax, and tobacco were also raised in the region.

“Camp Bragg” was established as an Army base in 1918 on 120,200 acres, and was located in the Sandhills partly to take advantage of the year-round training climate. In 1922, Camp Bragg was redesignated Fort Bragg, after Congress decided that all artillery sites east of the Mississippi would become permanent Army posts. A longleaf reforestation program began shortly after in 1923, an early start to Fort Bragg’s commitment to restoring and protecting significant cultural and natural resources as well as providing a buffer to their properties.

### Historic Transportation Connections of the Region

The Cape Fear River was a vital link for trade and commerce and the primary mode of travel to get goods and products to the coastal port at Wilmington. The Cape Fear is the only river in North Carolina that flows directly to the Atlantic Ocean, therefore shipping linked Fayetteville to the rest of the country as well as the world. Fertile lands surrounding the river allowed for agriculture to flourish and settlements to grow into viable cities and towns, and the river allowed products to get to larger markets.

Fayetteville and the surrounding region thrived as waterways were the favored method of transportation; however, railroads built in the 1830s soon became the preferred alternative for transporting goods in the state. Unfortunately, the railroad network bypassed Fayetteville. A few of the area’s major roads were upgraded with a planked surface. Plank roads, also known as the “Farmer’s Railroad,” were built during the 1840s and 1850s to allow farmers to transport their crops and other goods to market. All of the state’s major plank roads converged in Fayetteville because of its importance as a marketplace. Eventually plank roads became obsolete, as costs for upkeep and extensive damage during the Civil War took their toll.



*Plank Road historical sign*





Long Valley Farm Mill Pavilion

Much of the regional railroad infrastructure was also destroyed at the end of the Civil War. It was not until 1879 that Western Railroad became a part of the Cape Fear & Yadkin Valley Railroad, providing Fayetteville a way to connect to the larger statewide railroad system.

A comprehensive railroad network rapidly developed in the period between 1870–1900, and formerly remote communities were soon directly linked with regional urban centers such as Raleigh and Wilmington. In an effort to seek out and develop new markets, railroad companies sent agricultural and industrial specialists into the Sandhills to evaluate the social, economic, and environmental conditions. Entrepreneurs soon followed to construct health spas, sanitariums, and resorts in the Sandhills.

With the advent of the automobile, the region became known as a half-way point for travelers along the major north/south route between the northern states and Florida.

## Long Valley Farm



Long Valley Farm Dam Gates

Long Valley Farm offers a rare glimpse into the unique land-use history of Cumberland and Harnett counties during the early to mid-twentieth century. The land was part of “Ardnave,” a 13,000-acre turpentine plantation owned by the McDiarmid family. The plantation produced turpentine and lumber for the naval stores industry. The McDiarmid Millpond was likely constructed to process timber.

After Daniel McDiarmid’s death, the land changed hands several times and was cleared for timber. Old logging roads and cleared land offered a perfect opportunity for gaming and hunting. In 1906, the land was sold and became the Croatan Club of Manchester, a private hunt club.

In 1912, 363 acres of the Croatan Club lands, including a portion of the present day millpond, was sold to Dr. Joseph P. Ewing. This tract became the core of the present day Long Valley Farm property. He later sold the land to his brother-in-law, Robert Wall Christian.

It was Christian who named the property Long Valley Farm. Robert Wall Christian was known as “one of the most successful and scientific farmers in this section of the state” (News and Observer Obituary March 14, 1927). After purchasing the land in January 1914, he enlarged his property within a year to a total of nearly 967 acres. The original 1915 acreage is the south-central section of the present Long Valley Farm. His experiments in scientific farming were documented in the Soil Survey of Cumberland County issued by the USDA in 1925. He explored techniques of crop rotation, artificial fertilization, and artificial drainage.

Christian was elected to the North Carolina Legislature in 1924 and introduced legislation to provide a farm agent in every North Carolina county. He was the president of the state Farmer’s Association and the chairman of the Cumberland County Board of Commissioners and the County Board of Agriculture.

After his death, the land was sold to Percy Avery Rockefeller (nephew of John D. Rockefeller) and Windsor T. White. The present day Long Valley Farm was once part of Overhills, Percy Rockefeller's private winter estate.

During the interwar period of the 20th century (1919-1939) wealthy northern industrialists began constructing southern estates for use as winter and vacation residences and hunting and gaming lodges. Several examples of these "gentleman's estates" in North Carolina include the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, The Whalehead Club in Corolla, Overhills in Fort Bragg, and Long Valley Farm in Cumberland County.

James Stillman Rockefeller, a New York City banker and Percy's nephew, acquired both Rockefeller's and White's interest in the property in 1937. He graduated from Yale University in 1924, and that same year he won a gold medal in rowing at the Summer Olympics in France. He appeared on the cover of Time magazine on July 7, 1924.

The Rockefellers built their residence on the site of Christian's home, adjacent to the millpond. Christian's house was moved to another part of the property. Rockefeller lived there year-round while he was serving in the Airborne Command during World War II. Rockefeller also bought the additional acres of woodlands located north of the original 1914-1915 farm to bring the total acreage to the present day 1,420 acres.

Mr. Rockefeller was involved in the day-to-day operations of the farm. He enjoyed learning and experimenting with new farming methods. He also liked to oversee the cattle and crops being raised by his farm managers. His family visited the property several times a year and on most holidays. They enjoyed swimming and fishing in the pond as well as hunting and walking the trails around the property. James Stillman Rockefeller passed away in 2004 at age 102. He wished to see the farm permanently protected from development, so he left the property to The Nature Conservancy, who transferred the property to North Carolina State Parks.

### Sustainability

Sustainable practices have been used throughout the history of Long Valley Farm. Water was used to generate electricity and run the mill. Farm buildings were sited to take advantage of passive heating and cooling. Trees were planted strategically to cool the buildings in summer while allowing in the sun's heat in cooler months. Crop rotation methods increased farm production and reduced stress on the soil. Farm fields were sited to take advantage of existing woodlands as wind breaks, shielding crops from damaging winds. Building materials from older structures were often re-purposed in new structures as they were built on the site.

### Sandhills Section History

While the Sandhills Section does not contain any historic buildings or structures, it was frequented by American Indian groups, and later used in the production of naval stores and timber industries.



James Stillman Rockefeller,  
Time Magazine, July 7, 1924



Sandhills Section



*Sandhills Section*

## Park Land Acquisition History

### Long Valley Farm

The Long Valley Farm property transferred from The Nature Conservancy to the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation in 2010. After acquiring the property in 2004, The Nature Conservancy restored much of the land into longleaf pine habitat during its years of ownership.

### Sandhills Section

The first portion of the Sandhills Section was transferred from The Nature Conservancy to the state in 2006, and the second portion was transferred in 2010. The property was previously owned by the Clark family. In 1996, it was deemed a “safe harbor” property under the Safe Harbor Agreement, which is a voluntary agreement involving private landowners and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that allows for endangered species to prosper on homeowner’s land.

The Nature Conservancy acquired the first portion of the Sandhills Section in 2001 and began restoration of the longleaf pine habitat. In addition, The Nature Conservancy pioneered a conservation program with Fort Bragg to preserve, protect and restore Red-cockaded Woodpecker habitat while also providing a buffer to sensitive military operations. In addition to the increased security, the green space, or Greenbelt, is an added recreational benefit to soldiers, their families, and the entire region. This conservation partnership has been in place for over a decade and provides more than 14,000 acres of buffer around the base. The Long Valley Farm property is included in this conservation partnership, providing a much needed buffer to Fort Bragg’s northern training zones. Long Valley Farm also lies along the runway approach to Pope Air Force Base, so the conservation of this area ensures that encroaching development will not conflict with continued training flights.

Other conservation groups work in the Sandhills region to preserve the fragile ecosystem and restore habitat to the endangered species found there. Local conservation partners include the Sandhills Area Land Trust, the North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership, and others.

## Analysis of Site Context and History

The first inhabitants of the region populated the area because of its location along the Cape Fear River, which eventually brought more people, trade and commerce to the region. As the area grew and became prosperous, railroads brought even more opportunities for connections to the state and the rest of the country. It was these connections that eventually enticed wealthy northern industrialists to visit the area and begin building gentlemen’s estates for recreation. Long Valley Farm is one of the last remaining estates from this era.

The creation of Long Valley Farm as an agricultural estate by Christian and its subsequent expansion as a winter agricultural estate by the Rockefellers in the late 1930s and 1940s was a reflection of what was happening in the



Sandhills region. The development of scientific farming and agriculture coincided with the influx of wealthy land owners seeking land for gaming and recreation, and it occurred on lands that were portions of former plantations.

As Fayetteville and Fort Bragg continue to expand, large tracts of agricultural land will disappear to make way for urban and suburban development. The rich rural history and sense of place should be preserved for future generations.

In addition to the rich cultural history, the Sandhills region enjoys an incredibly diverse ecosystem and represents an incredibly important ecological addition to the state park system.